



Day Hiking in Badlands National Park



In addition to the day hikes described here, the 0.25 mile Fossil Exhibit Trail is accessible to those with mobility impairments and the 0.5 mile Cliff Shelf Nature Trail provides access for its initial 200 meters, then continues on a moderately strenuous loop that includes a series of stairs. These short interpretive trails can be traveled in less than 30 minutes.

Door Trail: 0.75 mile round trip trail that focuses on the park's geologic history. Starting at the northern end of the large Door and Window parking area four miles northeast of the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, the Door Trail penetrates into wildly eroded badlands through a break in the Badlands Wall called "The Door." The first 100 yards are boardwalk and accessible to those with mobility impairments. After this, the trail becomes a route designated by small yellow markers. The terminus of the trail is marked by a red marker. Trailside exhibits provide orientation. Wear closed toe shoes and a hat. Take water. It is recommended that you stay on the trail in the Door area. Those venturing into the formations occasionally lose their bearings and become lost. *Allow 45 minutes.*

Notch Trail: 1.5 mile round trip trail that is not recommended for those with a fear of heights. Meandering through a canyon, this trail presents the hiker with the opportunity to climb a steep ladder, then travel along a ledge to "The Notch" above the Cliff Shelf area. One of the best views of the White River Valley and the Pine Ridge Reservation rewards those who do complete the trail. For the adventurous, the Notch Trail can be treacherous during and just after heavy rains. The trail begins at the north end of the Door and Window parking area and requires hikers to wear sturdy hiking boots. A hat, water, and sunglasses are also recommended. *Allow 2 hours.*

Castle Trail: The longest trail in the park at 5 miles one way, the Castle Trail stretches between the Fossil Exhibit Trail and the Door/Window parking area. Primarily level, this path parallels some precipitous badlands formations. The Medicine Root Trail makes a loop within the Castle Trail from any connecting trailhead. Not heavily used, the Castle Trail offers a chance for solitude and wildlife viewing. *Allow 2.5 hours one way or 4.5 hours round trip.*

Saddle Pass Trail: Very short but very steep, the Saddle Pass Trail is impassable after rains. It connects the middle of the Castle Trail and the Medicine Root Loop to the Badlands Loop Road. The trailhead and parking area are located two miles west of the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. Stay on the trail, which is marked by posts. *Allow one hour.*

For All Hikers

- Always carry water. Two quarts per person per two hour hike is recommended.
- A hat and sunglasses are strongly recommended, as well as rain gear since weather conditions can change rapidly.
- Keep your distance from all wildlife encountered during your hike. Keep a distance of at least 100 yards. If wildlife reacts to your presence at all, you are too close.
- Remember that all park resources - fossils, plants, animals, artifacts, and rocks - are to remain as you find them. Each person is entitled to the same sense of discovery you experience when traveling the park trails.

